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ABSTRACT

These six guides on identifying and assisting the gifted school-age child are specifically addressed to either clinical social workers, school social workers, school counselors, nurses, physicians, and psychologists. Each leaflet examines the role of the target professional in providing assistance to gifted children. For example, the social worker's role is viewed as assessing psychosocial status, evaluating emotional and behavioral functioning, and providing appropriate psychotherapeutic intervention; the counselor's role is defined as providing assistance with educational planning and placement, career development, personal growth and development, and life skills development; and the nurse's role includes assessing children's developmental skills and assessing concerns and behaviors of family members. Each leaflet discusses identification criteria and student characteristics, outlines intervention techniques, lists 6 organizational resources (emphasizing Michigan resources), and lists 11 books. (JDD)

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Identifying and Assisting the Gifted Child [Six Guides for the] Clinical Social Worker; School Counselor; School Social Worker; Nurse; Physician; [and] Psychologist

Michigan State Board of Education

EC 302567

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RESOURCES:

The clinical social worker should become acquainted with the services of the Intermediate School District consultant for gifted and talented (each ISD in the state has a staff person familiar with local school programs and statewide resources), coordinators at the local district level, other mental health care specialists with expertise in gifted, and organizations such as:

- Local parent/child/educator advocacy groups for the gifted and talented
- Michigan Alliance for Gifted Education, P.O. Box 1732, Warren, MI 48090-1732, (313-294-8453)
- The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) 1155 15th Street, N.W. Suite 1002, Washington, D.C. 20005, (202/785-4268)
- The Association for the Gifted (TAG, a division of CEC) 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1589, (703/620-3660)
- Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG), School of Professional Psychology, Wright State University, P.O. Box 2745, Dayton, OH 45401, (513/873-4300)
- Michigan Department of Education, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909, (517/373-2551)

Additionally, several excellent books for and about gifted children and their parents are available. Samples include:

Clark, B. (1988) *Growing up gifted.* Columbus, OH: Merrill Publishing.

Cornell, D.G. (1984) *Families of gifted children.* Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press.

Cornell, D. G. & Grossberg, I.N. (1987) Family environment and personality adjustment in gifted program children. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 31(2), 59-64.

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Hackney, H. (1981) The gifted child, the family and the school. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 25, 51-54.

Horowitz, F.D. & O'Brien, M. (1985) *The gifted and talented: developmental perspectives.* Washington, D.C.: American Psych. Association.

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Kerr, B. (1985) *Smart girls, gifted women.* Dayton, OH: Ohio Psychology Press.

Rimm, S. (1986) *Underachievement syndrome: causes and cures.* Watertown, WI: Apple Publishing Co.

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10/92

GIFTED

Identifying and Assisting the Gifted Child

A Brief Guide for the Clinical Social Worker

Michigan State Board of Education

Clinical social workers may be called on to intervene with gifted children and their families in many ways. Assistance may be needed in:

- identifying who is gifted
- assessing psychosocial status
- evaluating emotional and behavioral functioning
- providing appropriate psychotherapeutic intervention

To adequately provide such assistance, the clinical social worker must be knowledgeable about giftedness and related issues such as identification, common characteristics, family dynamics, appropriate educational placement, and appropriate resources. This pamphlet addresses these issues.

IDENTIFICATION

No universally accepted standard for giftedness exists beyond the demonstration of unusual potential or achievement. An IQ of 130 or above is a common criterion, as are specific academic aptitude, creative thinking, talent in the arts, and/or unusual achievement and motivation.

Characteristics which *may* suggest unusual abilities include:

- Self-taught reader, often before entering school. Enjoys reading; reads intensely.
- High interest in words.
- Early talker.
- Large vocabulary.
- Early understanding of concepts.
- Talent in visual or performing arts.
- Unusual curiosity. Endless questions. Quick learner. Interested in time. Applies knowledge to new situations. Experiments.
- Unusual retention of information.
- Creative, imaginative, and abstract thinking.

- Wide range of self-initiated interests, including complex games and collections.
- Intense concentration, persistence, and absorption.
- Often popular leader but may hide intellectural capacities to gain social acceptance.
- May feel different from peers, but not understand why.
- Precocious sense of humor.

Although research shows that most gifted children tend to be as well-adjusted as other children, the problems and disorders they do have must be understood in the context of their unusual abilities. For example, a bright child who is bored and unchallenged may show signs of:

- ✓ hyperactivity, distractibility, inattentiveness, acting out and other symptoms of attention deficit disorders,
- ✓ underachievement and/or learning problems,
- ✓ depression,
- ✓ peer and/or family conflicts,
- ✓ somatic complaints, and/or
- ✓ eating disorders.

The tendency to be a perfectionist in thinking may lead some gifted children to low self-esteem, depression and/or feelings of inferiority. Many gifted children feel different from their age-peers, which can result in social isolation, poor peer relationships, or self-esteem problems.

Uneven development may result in expectations from parents, teachers (and themselves) beyond what the child is able to produce. Some gifted children may be unrecognized due to underachievement, low English fluency, or lack of enriching experiences in the home. In addition, gifted children are vulnerable to the same range of mental and emotional disorders as are children of average intelligence.

INTERVENTION

Psychotherapeutic intervention, whether of a supportive or insight-oriented type, must take into account giftedness as an important factor. To arrive at an appropriate diagnosis and treatment plan, the clinical social worker must determine the effect of the child's giftedness on all areas of functioning. Work with the schools, parents and families of gifted children is an extremely important dimension of clinical social work intervention as it enables a cooperative and informed approach to meeting the unique needs of the gifted youngster.

Problems specific to special populations of gifted children currently receiving research attention include:

- ✘ The identity problems of gifted adolescent girls (i.e. denial of ability).
- ✘ The learning difficulties faced by the racially or culturally different child.
- ✘ The physical barriers faced by the handicapped gifted child.
- ✘ The special needs of the highly (or "profoundly") gifted child who is so bright that finding a true peer is very difficult.
- ✘ The underachievement of some gifted children.
- ✘ The identification of giftedness among preschoolers.

RESOURCES:

The counselor who wishes to better serve gifted children and their families may wish to consult with the local or ISD Gifted/Talented coordinator, mental or health care professionals who have expertise in gifted, or one of the following organizations:

- Local parent/child/educator advocacy groups for the gifted and talented
- Michigan Alliance for Gifted Education P.O. Box 1732, Warren, MI 48090-1732 (313/294-8453)
- The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) 1155 15th Street, N.W. Suite 1002, Washington, D.C. 20005 (202/785-4268)
- The Association for the Gifted (TAG, a division of CEC) 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1589 (703/620-3660)
- Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG) School of Professional Pschology, Wright State University, P.O. Box 2745, Dayton, OH 45401 (513/873-4300)
- Michigan Department of Education, Gifted and Talented Programs, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909 (517/373-2551)
- Michigan Association for Counseling and Development, P.O. Box 190, St. Johns, MI 48879 (517) 224-9585.

Additionally, several excellent books for and about gifted children and their parents are available. Some of these are listed below:

Buescher, T.M. (1987) *Understanding gifted and talented adolescents*. Evanston, IL: Center for Talent Development, Northwestern University.

Colangelo, N. and Zaffrann, R. (1979) *New voices in counseling the gifted*. Dubuque, IO: Kendall/Hunt Publishing.

Delisle, J. (1987) *Gifted kids speak out*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Delisle, J. and Galbraith, J. (1987) *Gifted kids survival guide II*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Kerr, B. (1985) *Smart girls, gifted women*. Dayton,OH: Ohio Psychology Press.

Rimm, S. (1986) *Underachievement syndrome: causes and cures*. Watertown, WS: Apple Publishing Co.

Special issue on emotional adjustment of gifted students. (1990, Spring) Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 13:3.

Special issue on counseling the gifted and talented. (1986) Journal of Counseling and Development, 68:9.

Van Tassel-Baska, J., ed. (1983) *A practical guide to counseling the gifted in a school setting*. Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Webb, J., Meckstroth, E. & Tolan, S. (1982) *Guiding the gifted child*. Dayton,OH: Ohio Psychology Press.

Whitmore, J. (1980) *Giftedness, conflict, and underachievement*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

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GIFTED

Identifying and Assisting the Gifted Child

A Brief Guide for the School Counselor

Michigan State Board of Education

School counselors are committed to helping all students realize their full potential, including gifted children. All children need assistance with:

- Educational planning and placement
- Career development
- Personal growth and development
- Life/social skills development

For the gifted child such assistance may pose some unique problems. Contrary to popular notions, gifted children will not necessarily simply make it on their own.

IDENTIFICATION

Identification procedures vary across districts. For specific requirements, contact the local or intermediate consultant for gifted education. Concerns brought to counselors' offices by gifted students and/or their families *may* include:

- Being expected and expecting to be perfect.
- Fear of failure.
- Being viewed by others as NEVER having problems.
- Difficulty with social relationships
- Underachievement.
- Masking problems through highly developed verbal skills and manipulative mannerisms.
- Difficulty in decision-making due to multipotentiality.
- Fear of success (especially in adolescent females).
- Acute awareness of emotions, actions and motives of others.
- Challenges to moral and social tradition
- Being over-scheduled.
- Perception of effort as indicative of LACK of ability rather than as instrumental to achievement.
- Failure to "own" one's gifts and the responsibility for their development.
- Eating disorders.

INTERVENTION

Counselors may use several approaches or combinations as they respond to the needs of gifted students. One is responsive in nature and uses intervention and counseling techniques to treat problems or concerns as they appear. Another is indirect and "preventive" through the provision of a psychologically safe environment for growth and change.

Awareness of needs may arise during a counseling session and is a good place to start, followed by the gathering of additional data from parents, school administrators, teachers and community members.

Counselors may initiate support or discussion groups for students, parents, or both. They can also help teachers, administrators and others understand the unique emotional needs of gifted youngsters by arranging for professional development devoted to this subject.

Counselors can help students and their families take advantage of special opportunities available to gifted students such as the MDE Summer Institutes for the Arts, Sciences, and Technology.

Moreover, the counselor is in a prime position to help provide an environment where consistency, fairness, sensitivity and empathy exist — where gifted students can expect to be listened to, understood, and supported. The counselor can help gifted students feel secure in their sense of self worth.

POSITION STATEMENT SUPPORTS GIFTED

In 1986, The Michigan School Counselors' Association adopted a position statement which reads in part, "The Michigan School Counselors Association:

"*. . . believes that the unique needs of the gifted and talented students should be addressed specifically in order for the total school population to reach the projected academic standard.*

"*. . . recognizes that gifted and talented students need guidance in developing social skills, coping skills and decision making skills . . . to participate appropriately as members of the group and also to meet their own personal needs at a reasonable level.*

"*. . . advocates the improvement of the affective environment for all students emphasizing in this case those who are gifted and talented.*

"*. . . encourages its membership and other counselors to participate in local and state educational and counseling workshops, conventions and in-service programs by sharing their expertise in effectively working with the talented and gifted students, their parents and their teachers.*

RESOURCES:

The school social worker should become acquainted with the services of the Intermediate School District consultant for gifted and talented (each ISD in the state has a staff person familiar with local school programs and statewide resources), coordinators at the local district level, other mental health care specialists with expertise in gifted, and organizations such as:

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GIFTED

Identifying and Assisting the Gifted Child

A Brief Guide for the School Social Worker

Michigan State Board of Education

School social workers are called on to work with gifted children and their families in several ways. They help by:

- identifying giftedness
- assessing psychosocial status of gifted children
- evaluating emotional and behavioral functioning in home and school
- providing appropriate psychotherapeutic assistance to the child, family and school.

While not all school social workers have training in giftedness, they do have the ability to recognize common characteristics, assess family dynamics, plan appropriate educational placement, and be knowledgeable about a variety of resources. This pamphlet addresses these issues.

IDENTIFICATION

No universally accepted standard for giftedness exists beyond the demonstration of unusual potential or achievement. An IQ of 130 or above is a common criterion, as are specific academic aptitude, creative thinking, talent in the arts, and unusual achievement and motivation.

Characteristics which *may* suggest unusual abilities include:

- Self-taught reader, often before entering school. Enjoys reading; reads intensely.
- High interest in words.
- Verbal competence.
- Large vocabulary.
- Early understanding of concepts.
- Talent in visual or performing arts.
- Unusual curiosity. Endless questions. Quick learner. Interested in time. Applies knowledge to new situations. Experiments.
- Unusual retention of information.
- Creative, imaginative, and abstract thinking.
- Wide range of self-initiated interests, including complex games and collections.
- Intense concentration, persistence, and absorption.
- Precocious sense of humor.

Many gifted children feel they are different from their peers, and although they may be popular leaders, they often attempt to hide their intellectual abilities to gain social acceptance.

It is important to recognize the special needs of gifted children so their unique capabilities will not be negatively diverted. For example a bright child who is not challenged to use his/her skills may become bored or frustrated and show signs of:

- ✓ hyperactivity,
- ✓ distractibility,
- ✓ inattentiveness,
- ✓ acting out, and/or
- ✓ underachievement.

The tendency to be a perfectionist in thinking may lead to low self-esteem, depression and/or feelings of inferiority. Many gifted children feel different from their age-peers, which can result in social isolation, poor peer relationships, or self-esteem problems.

Uneven development may result in expectations from parents, teachers (and themselves) beyond what the child is able to produce. Some may be unrecognized due to underachievement, low English fluency, or lack of enriching experiences in the home. In addition, gifted children are vulnerable to the same range of mental and emotional disorders as are children of average intelligence.

INTERVENTION

Psychotherapeutic intervention, either supportive or insight-oriented, needs to consider the potential factor of giftedness. An appropriate and effective diagnosis and treatment plan will include a recognition that giftedness affects all areas of functioning. Collaboration of schools, families and therapists can assure an informed and efficacious plan for meeting the needs of the gifted child. School social workers are uniquely capable of fostering and sustaining this kind of collaborative effort.

RESEARCH

Problems specific to special populations of gifted children currently receiving research attention include:

- ✘ The identity problems of gifted adolescent girls (i.e. denial of ability).
- ✘ The learning difficulties faced by the racially or culturally different child.
- ✘ The physical barriers faced by the handicapped gifted child.
- ✘ The special needs of the highly (or "profoundly") gifted child who is so bright that finding a true peer is very difficult.
- ✘ The underachievement of some gifted children.
- ✘ The identification of giftedness among preschoolers.

RESOURCES:

The nurse who wishes to better serve gifted children and their families may wish to consult with the Intermediate School District consultant for gifted and talented (each ISD in the state has a staff person familiar with local school programs and statewide resources), the local school district GT coordinator if they have one, or one of the organizations listed below:

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Delisle, J. and Galbraith, J. (1987) *Gifted kids survival guide II.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Kerr, B. (1985) *Smart girls, gifted women.* Dayton, OH: Ohio Psychology Press.

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10/92

GIFTED

Identifying and Assisting the Gifted Child

A Brief Guide for the Nurse

Michigan State Board of Education

Gifted children may exhibit intense curiosity in infancy or toddlerhood, making them highly demanding of their parents. They often meet developmental norms early. They may master language skills early, learn new skills quickly, and ask incessant questions. Their upbringing poses a challenge and may lead to stress in the family.

Nurses have assessment skills that can help identify gifted children who advance in developmental tasks in an unusual manner. Nurses who are involved with children from birth may be able to assess concerns and behaviors of family members as they are expressed and suggest appropriate responses as needed, thus positively affecting gifted children and their families.

IDENTIFICATION

In infancy, toddlerhood, and the preschool years, indicators of giftedness are only somewhat reliable. Although the behaviors described earlier may be exhibited, developmental skills may be mastered in unusual bursts, and in fact may even be delayed. In general, however, they will show unusual curiosity, intense desire to learn and observe, and a marked ability to remember complex or detailed information. They may prefer older children or adults or assume the role of the leader with age peers.

Gifted children are best identified by use of multiple criteria. Samples are listed below:

- Two or more grade levels above placement on a test of achievement.
- Above 90 percentile or an IQ equivalent of 130 or more on tests of aptitude or intelligence.
- Judgments of experts in the field of talent.

- Demonstrated abilities beyond those normal for age.
- Teacher or parent behavior checklists.
- Evaluations of student products or portfolios.

Concerns of gifted children which may be related to their "giftedness," and deserve attention include:

- A feeling of being "different" from peers.
- Intense concerns about the implications of disease or a health condition.
- The need to be "perfect" which can lead to frustration when not achieved.
- Impatience with others who may be less able, sensitivity to adult issues and problems.
- Eating disorders.

The nurse can be alert to family concerns as well. These may include:

- Feelings of inadequacy in nurturing a bright child.
- Frustration with child's curiosity, questioning behaviors, and testing of limits.
- Resentment at the perceived inadequacy of the educational system.
- Sibling rivalry related to the gifted child's accomplishments.

INTERVENTION

The nurse can play a key role in helping the child, the family, and the school work through concerns related to the gifted child's unique abilities. He/she can:

- Help the child find ways to improve peer relationships and gain acceptance.
- Facilitate inclusion of the child in decisions affecting his or her health and welfare.
- Share results of developmental testing with the schools, thereby giving a more complete picture of the child as an individual rather than just bright.
- Help parents of gifted children understand that the gifted child, like other children, needs love and guidance — and perhaps more importantly — that he/she needs these for reasons **other** than accomplishments.
- Remind parents that the unique abilities and achievements of <u>all</u> the children in the family deserve balanced recognition.
- Help parents see that the gifted child who challenges parental rules needs appropriate limit-setting. Guide parents to resources on the management of discipline in the home.
- Stress a balance between leisure and academic pursuits.

Finally, if the family is experiencing unhealthy levels of stress in dealing with the child's behaviors and needs, the nurse can refer the child and family to mental health practitioners with experience in assisting gifted children and their families (mental health, clinical nurse specialists, social workers, psychologists, and the like).

ADVOCACY

The most important role the nurse can take in managing the care of the gifted child is that of child and family advocate. He/she can help the family provide optimal development of the child in all aspects: physical, emotional, social, moral, as well as cognitive.

RESOURCES:

The physician who wishes to better serve the gifted child and his/her family may want to become acquainted with the services of the Intermediate School District consultant for gifted and talented (each ISD in the state has a staff person familiar with local school programs and statewide resources), GT coordinators at the local district level, mental health care specialists with expertise in gifted, and organizations devoted to the support of gifted children and their families, such as:

- Local parent/child/educator advocacy groups for the gifted and talented
- Michigan Alliance for Gifted Education, P.O. Box 1732, Warren, MI 48090-1732, (313/294-8453)
- The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) 1155 15th Street, N.W. Suite 1002, Washington, D.C. 20005, (202/785-4268)
- The Association for the Gifted (TAG, a division of CEC) 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1589, (703/620-3660)
- Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG) School of Professional Psychology, Wright State University, P.O. Box 2745, Dayton, OH 45401, (513/873-4300)
- Michigan Department of Education, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909, (517/373-2551)

In addition, a number of excellent texts for and about gifted children and their families are available. Samples are listed below:

Buescher, T.M. (1987) *Understanding gifted and talented adolescents.* Evanston, IL: Center for Talent Development, Northwestern University.

Delisle, J. (1987) *Gifted kids speak out.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Green, M. (1985, October) Bringing out the best in gifted children. *Contemporary Pediatrics*, 66-74.

Kerr, B. (1985) *Smart girls, gifted women.* Dayton, OH: Ohio Psychology Press.

Rimm, S. (1986) *Underachievement syndrome: causes and cures.* Watertown, WS: Apple Publishing Co.

Special issue on counseling the gifted and talented. (1986) *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 68, No. 9.

Webb, J., Meckstroth, E. & Tolan, S. (1982) *Guiding the gifted child.* Dayton, OH: Ohio Psychology Press.

Whitmore, J. (1980) *Giftedness, conflict, and underachievement.* Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

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10/92

GIFTED

Identifying and Assisting the Gifted Child

A Brief Guide for the Physician

Michigan State Board of Education

Physicians can be of great help to gifted children and their families. While some gifted children may realize their potential without special help, most will benefit from the informed guidance of supportive adults such as parents, teachers, and physicians.

IDENTIFICATION

While no specifically accepted standard for giftedness exists beyond the demonstration of unusual potential or achievement, an IQ of 130 or above is a common criterion, as are specific academic aptitude, creative thinking, talent in the arts, and unusual achievement and motivation.

The following characteristics *may* suggest unusual abilities often associated with giftedness:

- Self-taught reader, often before entering school. May read insatiably.
- High interest in words. Early talker. Large vocabulary. Early understanding of concepts.
- Talent in visual or performing arts.
- Unusual curiosity. Endless questions. Interested in time. Applies knowledge to new situations. Experiments.
- Unusual retention of information.
- Creative, imaginative and abstract thinking.
- Wide range of self-initiated interests, including complex games and collections.
- Intense concentration, persistence and absorption.
- Often popular leader but may hide intellectual capacities to gain social acceptance.
- May feel different from peers, but not understand why.
- Precocious sense of humor.

Research shows that most gifted children are as well-adjusted as other children. Their giftedness, however, may lead to some presenting problems in which giftedness enters into the differential diagnosis. A bright child who is bored and unchallenged, for example , may exhibit:

- ✓ hyperactivity,
- ✓ distractibility,
- ✓ inattentiveness,
- ✓ acting out, and/or
- ✓ underachievement.

Many gifted children are brought to the physician because of problems with discipline. These intense and highly verbal children may have learned at an early age that they can manipulate their parents almost at will. Academically talented children who are overscheduled by their parents with music classes, Saturday sessions, and so on, or who are under pressure from self or others to achieve may come to your office because of recurrent headaches, abdominal pain, eating disorders, anger, or refusal to study. Adolescents may show somatic complaints or depression. Following are problems seen sometimes in gifted children:

- ✘ Hyperactivity, distractibilty, inattentiveness, acting out and other symptoms of attention deficit disorders
- ✘ School underachievement
- ✘ Discipline problems, dropping out
- ✘ Conflicts with teachers
- ✘ Learning disability
- ✘ Somatic complaints: headaches, abdominal pain
- ✘ Depression
- ✘ Eating disorders

INTERVENTION

An initial diagnosis of giftedness requires a careful review of parent observations (weighed against your knowledge of what is expected development for the child's age) as well as tests and other information from educators. An investigation into the interaction of the child's giftedness with his physical, social, and emotional needs is recommended as a basis for determining appropriate interventions. The professional judgment of a team of experts, such as the physician, psychologist, and school counselor, for both the diagnosis and intervention procedures, is advised.

Generally, then, the physician is in a key position to help the family provide optimal development for the child in all aspects: physical, emotional, social, moral, as well as cognitive.

RESOURCES:

The psychologist who wishes to better serve the gifted child and his/her family may want to become acquainted with the services of the Intermediate School District consultant for gifted and talented (each ISD in the state has a staff person familiar with local school programs and statewide resources). Many local districts in the state employ a specialist in gifted and talented as well. The psychologist may also wish to become familiar with human and materials resources about gifted children and their parents, including groups such as:

- Local parent/child/educator advocacy groups for the gifted and talented
- Michigan Alliance for Gifted Education, P.O. Box 1732, Warren, MI 48090-1732, (313/294-8453)
- The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) 1155 15th Street, N.W. Suite 1002, Washington, D.C. 20005, (202/785-4268)
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- Michigan Department of Education, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909, (517/373-2551)

Additionally, several excellent books for and about gifted children and their parents are available. Samples include:

Adderholdt-Elliott, M. (1987) *Perfectionism: What's bad about being too good?* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing Company.

Clark, B. (1988) *Growing up gifted.* Columbus, OH: Merrill Publishing.

Delisle, J. (1983) *Gifted children speak out.* New York, N.Y.: Walker and Company.

Galbraith, J. (1983) *The gifted kids survival guide.* Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Green, M. (1985, October) Bringing out the best in gifted children. *Contemporary Pediatrics*, 66-74.

Horowitz, F.D. & O'Brien, M. (1985) *The gifted and talented: developmental perspectives.* Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association.

Kerr, B. (1985) *Smart girls, gifted women.* Dayton, OH: Ohio Psychology Press.

Rimm, S. (1986) *Underachievement syndrome: causes and cures.* Watertown, WI: Apple Publishing Co.

Webb, J., Meckstroth, E. & Tolan, S. (1982) *Guiding the gifted child.* Dayton, OH: Ohio Psychology Press.

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A Brief Guide for Psychologists

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Psychologists can be of great help to gifted children and their families. While some gifted children may realize their potential without special help, most will benefit from the informed guidance of supportive adults such as parents, teachers, and psychologists.

IDENTIFICATION

Although no universally accepted standard for identifying the gifted child exists beyond demonstration of unusual potential or achievement, we do know that an IQ of 130 or above is a common indicant, as are specific academic aptitudes, creativity, artistic talents, leadership ability, and unusual achievement motivation.

Characteristics commonly associated with giftedness *may* include:

- Taught self to read, often before entering school. May read insatiably.
- High interest in words. Early talker. Large vocabulary. Early understanding of concepts.
- Unusual curiosity. Endless questions. Quick learner. Applies knowledge to new situations.
- Unusual retention of information.
- Creative, imaginative and abstract thinking.
- Wide range of self-initiated interests, including complex games and collections.
- Intense concentration, persistence and absorption.
- May feel different from peers, but not understand why.
- Precocious sense of humor.
- Sensitivity to moral dilemmas and career choices.

Psychologists can help identify the gifted and talented, verify ability levels, advocate for the gifted child's special needs, educate parents and school personnel, and evaluate behavioral and emotional disorders blocking optimal development.

Psychological testing as part of a multifactored evaluation can play a central role in substantiating the extent of a child's intellectual gifts. In addition, testing is used to identify strengths and weaknesses and to diagnose learning disabilities or emotional factors which impede full use of potential. The psychologist can help parents and educators understand the limitations of any test to accurately measure abilities in the superior or gifted range - especially with preschool children, culturally different children, and children from economically disadvantaged families.

INTERVENTION

Research shows that most gifted children are as well-adjusted as other children. Their giftedness, however, may place them at risk for specific problems and disorders requiring psychological intervention.

The psychologist must be alert to behavioral indicants of a need for intervention. For example, a bright child who is bored and unchallenged may exhibit:

- ✓ hyperactivity,
- ✓ inattentiveness,
- ✓ acting out, and/or
- ✓ underachievement.

Prefectionism is also common and may dispose the child to low self-esteem, frustration, depressed moods, eating disorders, and apathy.

Many gifted children and adolescents feel different from their age-peers which may result in damage to self-esteem and social isolation. Further, the gifted child is vulnerable to the same range of mental and emotional disorders as is the child of average intelligence.

Problems specific to special populations of gifted children currently receiving research attention include:

- ✘ The identity problems of gifted adolescent girls,
- ✘ The learning difficulties faced by the racially or culturally different child,
- ✘ The physical barriers faced by the handicapped gifted child,
- ✘ The special needs of the "profoundly gifted child," who is so bright that he/she cannot find a true peer even among most adults.
- ✘ The underachievement of some gifted children,
- ✘ The identification of giftedness among preschoolers.

ADVOCACY

Psychologists can serve as advocates for the educational and psychosocial needs of the gifted child both in the home and school settings. Many parents and educators have not yet accepted the concept that the gifted child has special needs. A popular notion is that gifted children will simply "make it on their own." The psychologist may need to advocate for the child who does not fit the school system's image of the gifted student as high achiever (i.e. the gifted child with attention deficit disorder, emotional disorder or learning disabilities).